

Undead Seeks Warmth

**- Volume 7 -
Intersecting Roads of Fate**

**-Author-
Endless**

[Rebirth Online World]

Chapter 1

A small city that was built on the northern part of Shardia kingdom, Elbart.

Inside the mass of humans, I walked.

Several days after I have left the [black lake], I got the information from profess that the fifth magic item resided in this city.

After flying towards Volthaizen, I went back again to Shardia, flying to the northern part took only 2 days.

The increase of my mana capacity seems to make my flying speed faster compared to the past.

Compared to the first time I flew... In other words, the time when I first became an undead ice angel, I was travelling around on foot a lot, it's only my body sensation but I felt like my velocity is several times faster than that time.

I'm grateful that my moving speed become much faster. The time I could stay up in the air also increased.

I, who was able to safely arrive at Elbart , decided that since went into the city through the gates as expected was impossible, so I went directly inside from the sky during the night.

And so, I was able to infiltrate the town without any problem, and now I mixed myself with the hustle and bustle of the people here, but.

The people's gaze that shoot towards me.

Honestly, it can't be helped that I was attracting lots of attention.

I was well aware of the fact that my appearance was beyond that of normal people, and even in this world, a person with silver hair is rather rare.

On the top of that, in my case, my appearance, and most of my skin were totally different from that of a living person.

That's why for the sake of fooling people as much as I could, I wore a mantel with a hood to cover myself from my head to toe.

But this was not in a manga. No matter how low my hood was, people can still see my hair, and they can still somehow look at my face.

In other words, it's become no more than for my peace of mind.

Even though, I didn't want to attract attention, I ended up attracting attention anyways.

If I had to say more, the information gathering also didn't work out as I intended.

That was of course. Even if quite some time had already passed since I came to this world from another world, I've never had any proper conversation with any humans even once.

in the first place, this is the first time that I have come inside a city where humans lived. I am having myself on alert so that they didn't found out that I was a monster, there's no way I could have proper conversation with them.

...if there's a person who could happily converses with a suspicious man wearing a hood, I wished for that person to come here right now.

Even so, I somehow was able to start to get some clues regarding the place where that magic item was kept.

From the story that I heard, the Elbart town mayor is a maniac collector, and thus he bought many rare works of art from many places.

It was a story that mingled with complain that I get from some drunk old guys in the bar at night, but since the same stories also reached my ears from other customers, possibly it is true.

A magic item can have many variations of shapes. Among them there's one that shaped as a picture, or an equipment that's evolved into a magic item.

If there's such kind of magic item existed in this city, then it should be at that place.

Even so, it's only been five days since I've arrived at this city.

The information that I've gathered until now didn't really meant that much, taking action with only some prediction is too risky.

If it's like this, having them being inside a cave like usual is easier.

Anti-human trap doesn't have any effects to me, furthermore the problem that had been troubled me all this time, will also be resolved because of the experience in the black lake.

Yep. Though I was sucked dry, but unknow to me at that time, what I got back in return was bigger.

Because of the magic that I've received when I had sex with Stella, finally I am able ---

-thud-

---- Ah shit.

Because I got to immersed in my thought, I bumped into someone.

It was not mistake though. I am aware of how bad the space and how hard it's to walk in this place, but I am not that dull to not able to evade a walking human inside this traffic.

My opponent also seems to be preoccupied with something, after we bumped into each other, that person fell onto that person's butt after that person balance crumbled.

The backlight was just right to hinder me seeing their face... but from that person's movement I could judge that this person was a girl.

Just like usual my body that become really strong at night, and become quite weaker in the noon. if it's not at night, my physical power reduced.

Me, who didn't want to raise any troubled, just mumble 'sorry', and extended my hand toward the fallen girl.

The girl stretched her hand towards me --- and the moment she touched my hand, with a startle she drew back her hand.

- It's, cold...!?

The moment I heard those word, I cursed at my own carelessness.

My body which was concealed by the cold air, always have the body temperature stayed below freezing point.

It was clearly not a human's temperature. The reason that I wore this mantle with hood was so that the cold air wouldn't leak out to the surrounding.

But then, in a moment of happening, I by mistake touched someone's hand.

No good, no good, no good.

Will the fact that I wasn't a human, be exposed?

No. In either case, it's true that she will suspect me.

I turned my back.

Weave my way through the sea of humans, I ran away.

-.....! Wa, wait! WAIT !! -

Echoed sound could be heard from my back.

...She chased after me.

I clicked my tongue, then entered the alley.

For a moment, I looked out at my surroundings, after confirming that there's no other people in the vicinity.

I used my [shadow gate], then I plunged myself into the shadow.

Chapter 2

..... That was dangerous.....

Traveling from one shadow to another, while checking if I have already arrived at the end of the city.

Smoothly coming out from the shadow.

If my heart was still beating, surely by now it will be beating like crazy.

I sat leaning against the wall, then I took off my hood.

A cold sweat... there's no way that will come out, but there were some thin layer of ice covering my face.

So, the coldness will change depend on my feeling, eh. Bothersome body just like always.

My body trembled because of the cold, then I make a slow sigh.

While looking at the white mist that was floating slowly in front of my face, I just realized that it's been a while since I took a breath.

Well, it's not really important though, so I thought.

Anyway, to think that I would make such a blunder.

There's something wrong with me. I dazed too much.

...Ever since the past (when I was still alive), I was always bad with a crowd of people.

Perhaps I'm being overwhelmed because of walking around the crowd for the past few days?

I totally lack concentration. It's not quite a good sign.

Even though I am already at the place where there're lot of humans... enemies lurking everywhere.

.....

...I have already quite adapted to my condition right now, eh.

To think, that I will think of a human of all things, as an [enemy].

While it's true that it's not a wrong statement, there's still something critically wrong with that.

Perhaps, my body and soul are slowly becoming that of a monster's.

Is it because I feel down after walking through the crowd of people that I hated?

I, didn't quite understand.

.....

To calm my mind, I sat down on the roof of one building.

there's no other people here, also since people can't see me from below, there will be no one that will be able to see me.

...The sky was blue.

While looking at the blue sky where not a spec of cloud could be seen, I thought of something whimsical.

Unconsciously, I held out my right hand in front of me.

Focusing my consciousness, changed the sensation.

This [changing of sensation] part.

Because I can't do it, it became a problem for me for quite long time.

But that's, a past story for myself in the present.

Swirling inside one's body, the source that can cause many phenomena.

The power that called as [magic power]... I clearly, could feel it.

Heaving up the magical power with my right hand as the center, while at it I composed the [aria].

Giving vector to the magic power, the process that gave the course of action and assigning of the power.

That was the thing that's called as aria, the product that is created by that action is

called as [magic].

Sometimes with spells, or perhaps a magic square, or sometime with movement.

The amount of the aria that existed surpassed the amount of race that existed in this world, but it's all same in a way that it was an action that will bring results.

Just like how Marrieta snapped her finger to use magic.

Or like how nee-san chanting her spell in a sound that cannot be grasped by a human's ears.

Finally, it's appeared on my palm, a blue magic circle.

Geometrical patterns that overlapped each other, it's creating some mysterious circle.

With a diameter that's just 20cm, they're revolving like flicked coins and then scattered.

It's scattered, the magic circle that turn into a particle similar to that of glass.

Now, they're moved like it's been blown by some gentle breeze, and then rotated around me just like a whirlwind.

The magic aptitude that I've got is the same as when Stella-twilight was giving her magical power to me.

The magic that she could use, in other world, one part of magic that's usable to a succubus, I am able to learn it.

For something that have relation with magic, it was an unrivaled supreme act.

Even a little magic like what I've just done, have amazingly delicate aria weaved inside it.

...Well, perhaps since it was from Stella, that one who is serious and punctual, who is and exception even among the succubus.

And then, while I was playing on my own, the clock tower bell rang.

...So, it's already noon, huh.

My mood has already become slightly better, maybe it's already the time that I should continue the information gathering.

I made some trivial blunder last time, but it's alright now.

I won't be touching someone else carelessly again.

It's just..... there's one thing that pique my mind.

Perhaps you can call it as, regret.

"WAIT !! "

That, voice.

That voice that tried to stop me.

Somewhere, in the past.

That's right, when was it? And where?

I can't remember it, but.

I felt... like I've heard it from somewhere.

Spiral of Fate

On the city where the crescent moon hung over, a silver coloured young boy walked in it.

Under the dim light of moon, one can only see his figure walking.

On that vague silhouette of his, only his deep blue eyes emitted light.

Surely, an otherworldly appearance, stood there.

[--- It's so silent that it hurts my ears.]

Along with white mist, resounded inside the silence, he whispered with a cold tone.

That word without any feeling came from it, what the meaning it actually have.

Only he will know about it.

[On days like this, no good things usually happen. I'll quickly finish my job here, and disappear from this place.]

A word where all of this distress, suffering and all other thing that happen on his pathway were mixed.

Thump..... *thumps*, he lightly kicked off the floor.

And thus, he slowly floated in the sky.

He placed his feet on the top of a wall just like a leaf.

It was the wall of this city's, Erbart town mayor's house.

[If I recall correctly, the exhibition room is on the left side of the house.]

The fact that he slightly lowered the tip of his eyebrow due to the guilt of the action that he was about to do.

[.....Ffuuh.]

For the last time, he made a small sigh.

He ---- Himuro Takahina.

He landed on the mansion's yard.

On the city's highest point to overlook the town, the clock tower.

On its tip, a girl who wore a monocle, stand.

[.....]

With her eyes that was strengthen with magic, she looked around.

A sweep glance at the town, she searched.

[...(Where is it, it must be somewhere in the city.)]

The way she knew what that thing is because of the chance that was overlapped by another chance.

By chance in the place where she had a request.

By chance when she was walking around alone.

Collided with a person in front of her, the thing that almost impossible to happen usually.

After all of them overlapped each other, it was a reunion that one could call it a miracle.

Merlan - Mashul continued her journey, just for achieving one true purpose.

The image of a certain undead that was burned into the back of her mind.

The man who protected her, that man's appearance.

Losing both of her best friend that grew up together with her at the same time.

For her who didn't have any relatives left, that was the reason for her to get up once again.

She wanted to give her thanks, to him whom she didn't know the name.

No. she just wanted to meet him once again.

She only wanted to meet and crossed words with him.

It's only that.

The time that she knew that he still lived(?)

Only that, it became the ultimate reason for her to ascend to the peak of adventurer till she was called the [Arrow Princess].

And then, now.

[.....!]

She found it.

The silver-coloured back.

Standing on a wall, his figure who was going towards a mansion.

[--- --- I won't lose you again.]

It was a prayer.

Casting off the sight magic, Merlan broke into a run.

And then, from the highest peak of the clock tower.

Without showing any hesitation, she jumped down following the momentum.

The woman who dosed off at a bed of an inn, suddenly opened her eyes wide.

As she raised her body.

Her long honey-blond hair was scrubbed against each other and made some noise.

With her amethyst coloured eyes, she looked at the empty bed beside her.

Looking at the bed with the trace of someone there already gone for quite long time ago, that girl.

[...*smirk*]

Ursula Pendragon chuckled.

What in the world was she thinking, what in the world was she thinking about.

The fact that she was mysterious and know no bounds, making it practically understandable.

With just one exception, the man that this woman was chasing after.

Trapped between the feeling of love and hate, he who have the same feeling as she once had even though the partner was different.

He, can undestand her, Ursula's true feelings.

And so, because of that perhaps.

Ursula, have some kind of weird feeling.

It's just vaguely... she just felt it.

He, Takahina.

Is at this city.

She came here, because she had that hunch.

She always had such hunch.

Due to the fact that she was already a broken person, she could follow her baseless hunch without a doubt.

And then, the fact that the girl which was supposed to be by her side was gone.

Meant that she had already met with him.

That's, what she believed.

[.....Is that so. maybe it's time for me, to go as well.]

She then stood up, quickly removed her pajamas.

She then wore a normal nun outfit over her body.

Since it's bothersome, she didn't wear her underwear.

[Wait, for me, kay?]

Combing her hair with her hand, making sure that there's no crease like usual.

[This time, for sure.]

The one that hang on her neck, was the half cross that she broke with her hands.

The thing that she put over her body, was the black cloth that he left for her.

Ever since she joined with that bow girl, the cloth that the male that accompanied them was similar to the man who she was chasing made her quite interested in him too.

But for now, for many reason, it's not important.

More than that, over anything else.

The most important, is that one thing.

[This time, for sure, I'll kill you, and separate your neck from your body.]

Just like that.

She whispered with a tone that one said to their lover.

The sister who was an outcast even among the heretics.

Making a kind smile, towards the city that was shrouded by eerie silent.

She hopped out happily.

Evil and the Evil Hero

[It's even further than I thought it was... This is Elbart.]

[Of course.]

To Marrieta who looked like that she just wanted to say that it was unexpected, Stella answered flatly.

Perhaps it was just in Marrieta mind, but Stella's tone was cold.

[Even though we could arrive at this place in an instant with connect but instead of doing that, her majesty said [I want to walk.] on a whim.]

[Awww ~ Stella is angryeyey~. Let's be more cheerful, okay? Let's smile!]

[I won't smile. rather, I will not smile.]

For these girls who were the top even among the demon race, in the first place they should be able to move around the continent freely.

But at that moment, because of Marrieta's usual habit they decided to walk.

[Still, it was fun, right? Looking around the city along the way]

[But you made all of the man you met crippled.]

[...The scenery was really beautiful, right!?!]

[On your whim, you could blast away a mountain]

[...Lack of exercise! walking is really good for the health!]

[Look who's flying right now?]

It seems that she was always this harsh along the journey.

But the fact that she didn't neglect on looking after Marrieta, showing how diligent Stella is.

[...Well, her majesty's selfishness is a usual thing, I am not surprised by it anymore.]

[Don't call it selfishness, I am just very open to my own desires.]

People would call it selfishness.

Though they're not human

After Stella shook her head, she turned around and bowed her head.

[Anyway, we are about arrive at Alberto anytime soon. Before we get the magic item in our possession, please don't do something that makes us stand out.]

[I understand. I only will at most have a secret meal, alright?]

[Alright.]

As she was relieved after looking at Stella who seems consent with her, Marietta looked upwards.]

[Waah. The crescent moon is so pretty ~]

[Since there isn't a moon at the lake..... Now that I think about it, it's been quite a while since the last time we looked at the moon like this right?]

[That's indeed already quite a long time. The castle is inside a closed space after all.]

While she laughed happily, the cuff of Marrieta's half transparent black dress fluttered. Then with a good humour, when they about to continue on their journey to Alberto that's just around the corner.....

Kuuh..... uuh, aah, uuuuu.....

The crying voice that suddenly come to their ears.

At the same time, a presence of terrifying amount magical power came closer towards their position.

The two dropped their fooling atmosphere around them a moment ago and took up a battle stance.

Towards the figure showing itself after going its way through the thicket, a golden haired and scarlet-eyed girl.

vermouth - Erzalord.

---- From the opposite direction, another shadow that was walking towards the city.

[Fwaaah... I have finally arrived. It's really tiresome though ~] (*TL : gyaru like speech pattern*)

The girl who smashed the jawbone of a huge bear with a kick with her foot.

Muttered so, while yawning.

The Vampire and Queen Lilith

---- That girl, due to her loneliness, didn't know the meaning of [love]
due to the loneliness, she didn't know how to express her feelings anymore.
Due to the loneliness, she didn't know how the heart should be at the moment.
She who lived for more than 800 years, having the knowledge of this world inside her head.
But since she was lonely, she was too ignorant.

That girl, will blush when saying that she is falling in love.
It was the first time that she fell in love, she said
Even so.
Even so.

That girl doesn't know the way to understand her own heart.
Why did she fell in love, will she be able to understand it?

She, Vermouth-Erzalord.
Is the feeling that she felt towards Himuro Takahina.
Is it really ---- something that one could call it [love].

[Uuu..... waaah.....]
[-----kh!!]

That girl dressed in luxury with wavy blonde hair that grew very long.
While still weeping and crying, she showed her figure in front of Marrieta and Stella.

[Your majesty...]

[Yes... I understand. To think that we will meet the same brethren as me in such a place, am I right?]

The magical power that's on the same level or possibly higher than Marrieta who was the demon king or queen of the Lilith.

A monster that held that much of power, rarely exist in this world.

If Marrieta ranked all of the monster that existed inside this continent, without a doubt the one in front of her will enter the top 5.

If that's so.

The girl that is not normal and crying that standing in front of them.
Is the same as Marrieta --- A demon lord.

[Golden dragon... no, perhaps emperor vampire.]

[Seriously? It's my first time seeing one.]

While cracking a joke, Marrieta walked towards the vampire.

Even though just a moment ago, she was flooded with magical power that threw her into taking a fighting stance, but she didn't feel any will to fight from her opponent.

If that so, then there's no need for her to get all tensed up.

With a voice without any tense feeling like her usual tone, Marrieta called out for Vemought.

[Good evening ~, why are you crying ~ ?]

[.....]

From her back she can feel Stella giving her a glare that said [What the hell are you doing!?!]

There's a possibility that their opponent was a vampire with high pride.

Nevertheless, that they have seen her crying figure, talking to her with that tone is absolutely no good.

Even though pretending that they didn't see it, and just walked away from the place was the most usual action to take.

But Marrieta, didn't restrain herself.

Straining herself was not beautiful, on the top of that, not doing something that crossed her mind was going against her way of life.

A vampire's pride was so high that they will never let another race to be higher than them, but she wasn't minding other's glares while crying.

Don't that make you curious for the reason?

If you're curious about something, then it's normal to ask about it, right?

You can call her too simpleminded, being too frank was her true nature.

It is indeed very Lilith-like who lived without any reasoning and just relying on their instincts.

[.....Uuh ~..... Lilith, eh?]

[Yes yes ~ I am a Lilith, got a problem with that?]

[.....]

Scrubbing her eyes, the vampire stopped crying.

And then with her scarlet eyes with one side covered by her blonde hair, looked like it was glaring at Marrieta.

[.....My spouse, is not with me. Even though I searched for him, I can't find him. And so, I am sad.]

[Did he run away?]

A rude way to ask something.

Stella who were waiting behind Marrieta, could clearly hear the vampire gritting her teeth.

Her scarlet eyes waver in irritation, she, slowly, just like groaning, muttered.

[Shut up..... you filthy, bitch.]

[whaa ~ How crueel! Despite looking like this I still choose my partner you know!~]

[Don't lie, you do it without any discrimination, am I right?] - Stella

[It's not like that! It's just that my preference is just too wide, it's just that! I just could do it even if it's a grown up, a child, an old man, a handsome man, or even an ugly person!]

People called that as indiscrimination, or perhaps someone without integrity.

Neither anyone of them was human though.

[.....I didn't have any time to talk with someone stupid like you. Well then.]

[Eeh ~ wait ~, let's just talk a little more.]

[He, her majesty.....!]

Stella cannot calm her mind down.

If the opponent was just one among the masses, Stella won't act anyway like this.

But the opponent was the emperor vampire.

Different from Marietta who's just become a demon king recently, she was the existence that was standing still becoming one of the strongest monsters for hundreds of years.

If they offended her feelings, it will not come out without them getting hurt.

If the opponent said that they will go away, then they should just accept it obediently.

[After all, aren't you curious about it? To think that there's a man who's able to make the great vampire cry, if possible I want to meet with him.]

[I, don't have any interest in it.] -Stella

[Well, of course Stella didn't have any interest ~? After all, she is focused on this wonderful angel, right? ~]

[Syuch a thwing is!?!]

She bit her tongue.

Changing the point of her spear, Marrieta started to making fun of Stella.

...But.

[..... Ang, el?]

Her eyes slightly opened wider, the golden vampire.

[Hmm? That's right, it's an angel, he's an undead too.]

[Lli, like I said, your majesty, I didn't have such feeling for takahina-sama ----]

[kh!?!]

Takahina.

The vampire who heard that name.

Vermouth's expression went into a drastic change

[Hina.....? You guys, did you know..... Where Hina is?]

[Hwaa?]

Tottering.

A surprised look clearly can be seen in her eyes, Vermouth walked towards Marrieta.

[.....Re]

A blurred voice.

And then.

[Where is he! WHERE IS MY SPOSE, HINA!!]

Her pupils widened like a snake's.

Her sharp fangs, can be seen clearly too.

She raised her voice, as if she was barking.

[Heeh ? Spouse? Takahina is?]

[WHAT"S WRONG WIT ----!!]

Vermouth finally realized.

It was faint, very faint.

The Lilith in front of her, and then her retainer succubus behind her.

Have Takahina's scent, waft from them.

[You bastards... What did you do, to Hina?]

[We deliciously ate him, of course, in sexual meaning, right ~]

It was a direct answer without any time for Stella to stop it.

immediately following, Marietta jump backwards.

GRAAASH!!!

A swing of her hand, an attack with her claws.

That power which was able to make a huge hole in the earth, it's something higher than some mediocre magic.

Stella who evaded the attack at the same time as Marrieta jumped behind, opened her eyes wide looking at the vermouth who was able to show such performance with just physical strength.

And then, Marietta also slightly regretted saying anything.

```
[...Ki, ll... Ki,LL, KILL, KILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILLKILL  
KILLKILLKILLKILLKILL!!!]
```

A intense rage that made one felt like the atmosphere will get burned off.

They have totally... made the vermouth, angry.

Demon lord and demon lord.

The so called strongest power in this world.

If treated poorly, those power which is capable of destroying the world.

clashed with one another.

The Second and The Fifth

[AAAAH!!]

Vermouth who swung her arm in anger, created a wind blade that came out from the tip of her claws.

[Kyah ~]

Marrieta able to evade that wind blade by twisting her body.
Followed by a roar, the trees that was behind her, torn to shreds.

[Wait, wait, that's impossible!?!]

[Your majesty, below you!]

At the moment when Marietta broke her stance, Vermouth's fast kick came rushing.
Even when Marrieta rolled around to evade the incoming attack, it scrapped her cheeks a bit and scald her skin.

Surely it didn't only end with that, Vermouth's foot that's now hanging in the air swung straight down, performing an axe kick.

Perceiving that she had to evade that attack, Marrieta quickly put her hand in front of her.

And then, she snapped her fingers.

DOOOON!!

Thunderous roars. Hot winds blew in the vicinity.

With Vermouth as the core, the atmosphere was bursting up.

[Not yet, here it comes!]

Snap

Once again, she snapped her fingers and the air burst outwards.

The cloud of dust that was created from the shockwave and the hot air, covered Vermouth's figure.

However, that was not the end of it.

Marrieta put both of her hand in front of her, and with a speed that looked like she wasn't even breathing.

*Snap snap snap snap snap snap snapsnapsnapsnapsnapsnapsnapsnapsnap
snapsnapsnapsnapsnapsnapsnapsnapsnap*

Simultaneously, the space continued to burst.

The hot air itself was burning up like a fire, making the earth glowing bright red.

A technique using super serial attack magic where magical power really became the main core, a thing that's impossible to be done by most humans.

Even her magic formation was top notch. Normally, one wouldn't use it focused on only one place like this, but because of that, the fire power is guaranteed.

As a minute passed, and the moment when the ground has melted and formed a puddle of magma.

Marrieta stopped her snapping fingers and brushed her hair upward.

[Fuuuh. Perhaps, she got burned until not even her bones remained ?]

The heat of the core, if put into degree Celsius, will have exceeded five thousand degrees Celsius.

That's just like being burned by the sun itself.

However.

[.....Hot]

shaking of the heat haze that was created from the heat, Vermouth appeared.

Though there's slight dirt on her clothes... but there's no signs of wounds on her body.

Not even the tip of her hair got burned, one could say that she was not hurt.

[Well..... There's no way it will go that easy ~]

[kh!]

A strong punch that could kill any weaker being even with just a graze, such attack was aimed at Marrieta but then.

[- STOP -]

[Ugh ! ?]

Stella with a magical formation glowing from under her feet.

Using a minutely crafted magical formation, she was able to completely stop Vermouth's movements.

[Kh..... your majesty, now. Even for me, the longest I could stop such magical power... Is only 10 seconds, at most.]

[Good job, Stella!]

With a smile blooming on her face, Marrieta made a big leap backwards.

Then, she, touched her own lips with her index finger, slightly, however, firmly.

It's not a practical magical formation, but she started her magical formation with all seriousness.

[- Love is the same as a sickness -]

[- Trismegistos who go towards the east -]

[- The ancestors surely are shouting -]

[- The others surely will mourn -]

[- The neighbours surely will be strangled to death while laughing -]

[- The lover surely will sing the song of love forever -]

It's a complicated and mysterious magical formation.

Those formation, as if exposing the girl's heart.

The magical power that gushed out from inside her body, changed its shape.

Finally, those became countless spear that were smeared with the colour of darkness.

[- A moonstone that mingled with a star -]

[- Slaughter whom piled up darkness -]

[...- Les·miserables-]

A rain of spear poured down from above.

Each one of them was cladded in spiral, unavoidable tip.

What's more.

[- Melting the world -]

The countless spears that stabbed Vermouth started to melt.

The darkness that transformed into an acidic liquid, will melt away everything that it touched.

A magic that combine -Les.Miserables- that created magical spears.

And -melting world- that will melt away everything.

[AAAH!!!]

Vermouth shook off the dark acid from her body, she also broke the restriction by sheer strength.

Nevertheless, it seems that the attack is effective, her clothes has melted on various place, even there's some trace of scald on her skin.

And now, that's not something good.

Receiving some half-baked damage.

That's become the true switch for her to unleash her limiter.

[UUuuu...]

It was the round gem that was buried in her chest.

It was a blue sapphire, which was unfit for her who's match with Vermilion.

Vermouth, gouged it out with her fingers.

[Kh! Your majesty! That's is a seal!!]

[Haaah!? Her powers were sealed!? But even so, she's already that strong!?!]

With magical power gushing out of her body.

It was a padlock that the girl who wanted to become weak, put it into herself.

Losing herself due to anger, she removed it.

- Vermouth = Erzalord

Present magic aggregate amount: 196.959

- Marietta = Nightgale

Present magic aggregate amount: 107.112

They're both demon lords.

But even so, there's still some hierarchy among them.

Vermouth, was the second demon lord [Emperor Vampire]

Marrieta, was the fifth demon lord [Queen Lilith]

The second and the fifth.

Among the two girls, there's a huge difference in power.

Following that Back

---- There was a weak, fragile girl.

That weak girl, one day, who lost her dearest friends.

That weak girl, who cannot protect her own life.

That weak girl, who was saved by a guy with cold body.

Ever since that time, that girl, was determined that she will become stronger.

That girl whose name became well known inside the kingdom, while growing up within the continent, but she never opened up her heart to anyone else.

That girl, despite being human, she was chasing after a freak.

That girl kept searching for that man, kept searching, kept searching, and wished for him.

Until her appearance closely resembled that of a sick person.

Then.

Before she realized it, the girl, bearing only one wish inside her mind,
this girl was human,

however, the one she held dear for was not a human.

The chance of the two to be married, by no means, was zero.

That's what, she thought.

Deep down inside of her heart, to the extent that she herself didn't realized it.

She wished to become, a non-human being.

Inside the corridor of the villa with red carpet covered-floor, Merlan quietly moved forward.

In the first place, she was a hunter who hunt the monsters within the forest.

Therefore, she has a slight superiority in her skills of hiding, the sound of her footsteps was silent and of course, she had also totally killed the sound of her breathing and the rustle of her clothes.

For someone who didn't focused enough, surely wouldn't be able to realize even if she walked passed right beside them.

Her figure, became that of thin air.

[.....]

"Fuh" Merlan stopped and lowered her sight.

Up ahead, there was a guard who must be on duty lying on the ground.

She slowly crouched down, she then touched the nape of the guard.

From the transmitted body temperature and a firm pulse.

It will seem that he only fainted.

[(Possibly it was one hit on the back of the nape. With a quick hand blade, the one who did it skillfully will then be able to give enough impact for it to work. It doesn't even leave a bruise, heh.)]

Her whole battle experience that she had accumulated, gave her the precise information of what has happened.

It was totally refined work, showing the basis of assassination technique.

Even assassins from dark guild, wouldn't have this level of skill.

[(...It's been almost one year, heh)]

Piled up together with her memories of losing her two best friends, that she will always believe for her entire life, a meeting with a bit of bitterness.

With just that, that memories were burned into her head, so that she will never ever forget about it.

A black-haired zombie, that she didn't know its name.

...He himself said it, that he doesn't remember his own name.

The face that guy, Merlan will never be able to forget about it.

An expression mixed of sorrow and loneliness, with a bewildered expression.

That's because a name is something like the proof of who you really are.

But he had none, he didn't remember it.

She wondered how much he will remember.

Merlan once again stood up, killing the sound that she made and once again continued forward.

The fact that the guard has fainted at that place, meaning that there's some abnormality happening.

Thus, in other words, he who plunged into this mansion before her, surely, he had also passed by this way.

This mansion was not that big.

It'll be soon before they will meet again.

With her heartrate rising, Merlan slightly raised her speed.

[.....]

In front of a sturdy door, Merlan stopped.
The door was slightly opened.
The lock was twisted and broken, fell lying beside her.

Gulp She swallowed her saliva.
...There's no doubt.
Beyond this door, must be him.

For the second time, they passed by each other.
Just a little more, she seemed to be able to about to reach him, but in the end, she couldn't.
Her heart tightened, it felt like it's going to burn.

This time, this time for sure.
She tightened her fist.
Merlan, put her hands on the door.

[Kh!]

However, she quickly retracted her hands.
That door which was made from steel, was coated with unbelievable coldness.
If she pushed it with her palm a little more, surely her skin would have peeled off.

While feeling uneasy, she put on her gloves.
And then, she pushed the door with all her might.

*Crack..... crack, crack..... *

The iron door that opened heavily.
The sound that clearly transmitted into her ears... the sound of ice breaking?
The door that separated that room and the corridor finally opened, the spectacle inside of that room reflected into Merlan's eye.

The moment she saw those spectacle, both her eyes opened wide.

[Wha...]

It was a showroom 20 meters wide.
Lots of work of art, it must be the collections of the mayor's hobby.
The whole room was turned to ice, the whole surface was glowing silver.

Then.
The girl who moved her eyes to the center of the room. She raised voice....."Ah"

It's there.
The man that she had always been searching for all this time.

His back was facing towards her, looking like he's at a loss.

The silver-haired man who was holding a piece of mirror in his hands, was there.

Understanding a person that descended into madness

---- The girl, who was about to be broken.

The girl, who was the daughter of a certain man who governed over a certain city.

The girl, who was raised with lots of affection from her father who was an evil person.

The girl, who got everything that she ever wished for without having to do any of the hard work.

The girl, who didn't know that her food and clothes were all something that's stolen from those who were weaker.

The girl, who was raised without knowing what's right and what's wrong.

When she was just a little girl, she was kidnapped.

Now, for that girl, what was the most unfortunate thing that happened to her?

The fact that her father got killed?

The fact that she was raised without knowing what was justice?

No, not even slightly did she think that as unfortunate.

For her, the most unfortunate thing that happened to her,

it will surely be the fact that she was born, with her brilliance beauty.

With resentment and lust, she was sullied by the hand of those weaker people who were tyrannized by her father.

Due to a helping hand that came like a miracle, she was able to run away from that hell.

All her memories concerning about that time sunk into the depths of her mind. Then, she came to hate humans.

She, loved the angel.

She, hated the angel.

She loved that angel who came and answered her prayers.

she hated that angel who didn't choose her.

However,

the girl didn't know.

Just like the girl, the angel loved someone else.

Just like the girl, the angel hated someone else.

Not that grieving vampire.

Not that earnest bow user girl.

Not that crow girl who died for him.

Not that strange succubus.

The fact that, that girl was the sole and only one who could understand the cold angel's feelings.

The girl, ironically, didn't know.

With the night as her stage, Ursula sang.

That song which flowed gently from her mouth, so beautifully that it didn't need any enhancement.

The moonlight that shined over her, making her look like a fairy from a fairy tale.

[~ ~ ???]

Her honey blonde hair, was reflecting the moon light.

Beautiful hair, beautiful skin, beautiful face, beautiful body, and a beautiful voice.

Surely this girl, Ursula-pendragon was created with everything beauty that could be thought up by a person was all in her.

Ursula, hated her own appearance.

She who no one would want to approach but was always praised.

For her, who detested humans, that beautiful appearance was like a fire that was attracting moths towards it.

It's disgusting, disgusting, disgusting.

Behind that of an always smiling face, the girl muttered.

Not to mention, that touching one was an unreasonable task for her.

Despite she being human, she had long since become something that was out of the category of human.

Then, for her who should be going after Merlan to meet up with Takahina, why was she idling around in a place like this?

For her who didn't know any reasoning or forecasting, waiting in this place was the right choice, or so she believed.

After all, there's no way that she will be able to follow Merlan on foot, and of course she will never be able to follow Merlan without being caught.

If so, then there's no need to even follow her in the first place.

Yes, there's no need to follow her.

She, didn't know which direction Merlan went, and it's not like she needed to know about it anyway.

After all, Ursula already knew,

that Takahina will come to this place.

Though, she didn't forecast anything or have any theory backing it, she just knows.

As for why that is.

She herself didn't understand the reason why.

The two of them were similar.

Both of them embraced a deep love towards someone and being imprisoned by it.

And so, both of their soul will always attract each other.

Just like how water from a different container, will combined with each other when met.

More than Vermouth, who tried to bound their souls together.

More than Merlan, who kept on following the back of that person.

More than Misha, who broke his heart due to her death.

More than Marietta and Stella, who deeply desire for his body.

More than anyone. In fact, more than everyone else.

Even though, that she didn't realize it.

More than anyone, Ursula was the closest to Takahina.

More than anyone, Ursula was able to understand Takahina.

No matter how twisted her feelings were.

Even if the only fate that they had was too kill each other at that time they met.

Ursula was, bound to Takahina through their soul.

That's why.

No matter if she wished for it or not.

[.....Oh my ~]

They will meet again.

[Guuuh..... ah, aaaah.....]

With a force, an angel landed on the ground.

His face was grim. From his eyes, tears were flowing.

With a small mirror in his hands, a mirror that was showing all the truth of this world, the [mirror of disclosure].

Himuro Takahina, finally arrived at Ursula's location.

The Entrance to the End

--- There's one man who got stranded in another world.

He was an undead.

He didn't know.

He kept on killing while still not knowing about anything.

The result, one part of his memory returned, and he regretted over all of the life that he had already taken.

Thus, he became unable to take another soul.

To once again give life meaning for himself, and to the girl who he admired, the boy wandered around the world.

The boy who cannot steal anything, having his heart always aching.

To say that he cannot kill, meaning that he cannot point his blade to those who are alive.

Growing within a country without war, the boy who grew up without any conflicts.

Even when he hurt his enemy, it'll hurt his own heart in return.

He was too weak.

Too fragile.

Too faint.

Too pure.

Too kind.

He was, too irregular.

And then, he was inelegant to the degree that he realized his own irregularities.

He, who wished for a life, but cannot take another's life.

Life means taking another's life. Each beat of one's life means that there's another life that's being sacrificed

But even so, the boy will not kill. No matter whose life it was, he could not even take one.

The pain of losing someone, the sadness.

For that boy knows deeply of those things, and he who respects the other person more than anything else.

Will never be able to steal, another life.

And thus.

Being [alive] which is having direct relationship with stealing another life.

The boy couldn't do it.

Even when he knows well of those things, the boy kept wishing for a warmth of life.

To ward away, this unbearable coldness.

For taking back, those who're precious to him.

While slowly, shaving himself away.

However, fate was cruel.

The boy cannot remove the reins.

The wire that bound him.

It tore into his meat and broke his bones.

His meat was his body, his bones was his heart,

It was cruel, too cruel.

The thing that he shouldn't have to know, he ended up knowing about it.

And thus, his heart,

broke apart.

(TL: now the explanation for the part above)

Walking inside a mansion that's not as vast when compared to that castle of the Lilith queen.

He took out every soldier that he met with his experienced hand sword.

Broke the lock that's very sturdy when viewed from a human point of view.

Himuro Takahina, arrived at the place of his destination.

[...So, it's here]

His tone, was very deep.

His sight also blank, even now he seemed to be taking a big sigh.

If vermouth ever saw this sight, surely, she will sadly patted his head.

That was the kind of expression that he had.

Ever since he died, the time that he thought that all of his actions were just, but there were none.

It's full of problems, he always felt lost.

He was always lost inside his labyrinth of thought, and never once did he ever find the answer that he was searching for.

On the top of that, he was weighted by the matter of this time.

He will be stealing some person's belongings, and for that, he ended up injuring several people.

He was reluctant.

But even so, he couldn't think of any other way beside this way.

The [I'm sorry] that he mutters before he hit the soldier, perhaps it was the minimum repentance that he could have done.

With still dark face, he walked inside the exhibition room with its decorations.

Inside that, all kind of work of art that Alberto city's chief have gathered were lined up inside this room.

Each one of them seemed to have quite high value, but unfortunately Takahina didn't come here to search for gold.

In the first place, even he had gold in his possession it'll be useless, he will have no way to spend those money.

He stretched his hand towards one of the articles, and slowly touched it.

Right now, he who already have aptitude in magic, with just by touching it like this, he will be able to know if that item was a magic item or not.

Pictures. Sculpture. Ornament. Some unknown event Grande art.

That's not it, that's also not it, the thing over was also not it.

[.....Kh!]

And then he found it.

On the edge of the room.

A small mirror that's hanging on the wall, with the diameter around 10 centimeters.

It was adorned with meager ornament, but inside this room it was an item that will not stand out.

At the moment he touched it, at that moment also the moment that he knew, it was the fifth magical item that he had been searching for.

Then, he activated his special magic which searched for information in the form of memory which was directly linked into his head with magic power, [Profess].

The information about the magical item flowing into his head.

Furthermore, it was more vivid and detailed than before.

Its name, its effect, its history, all of it.

He could understand it. Perhaps it's either that it was because of the grace of the magical power from the succubus who excelled in magic, or perhaps he just became better at managing his magical power.

In either case, the accuracy had increased drastically compared to what it was before.

[...[Mirror of disclosure]?]

A mirror that allowed one able to know every truth about this world.

A mirror that was able to see through any kind of lies.

Depending on how it was used, it was a very useful high-grade magic item that can be used for many general purposes.

However, even so. It's still not what he was searching for.

With a slight discouragement, Takahina who went to put the magic item to its respective place because he didn't have any intention to bring away other people's belongings away, but then at that moment.

[.....!]

In an instant, his body stiffen.

Due to his hand which contained magic power, touched mirror that haven't been used for quite a long time.

The magical power that resided within that mirror was released.

Due to the effect of the magical item that was activated, his point of view changed.

Red, red, it was the prairie which was to become of this place that he missed.

And then, it came to his eyes.

The cruel truth, the truth that he didn't know about.

Disclosure of Despair

Inside the clear reflection without any sound.

Just like a ghost, Takahina's vision floated around aimlessly.

The vast prairie that spread out.

Lost in the, [deep reed prairie].

However, he who seen this place had a stiff expression.

.....That's of course,

because of this place.

He lost the one who was precious to him

[.....?]

Not long before, his vision blurred out.

His field of view that shown the whole prairie gradually zooming out pointing at a certain place.

At one corner of the prairie, it stopped.

[!]

To that figure who appeared in front of him, Takahina gulped.

The long blonde hair.

Covered by one of its bangs, those crimson eyes that's redder than blood.

The end of her eyebrow looked slightly drooped, a face with expression of a broken doll.

Wearing a red lining cape over its shoulder, with a dress that's well fitted with that cape.

On the chest that peeked out from its collar, one could see a round sapphire directly embedded in it.

For sure, without a doubt.

It was none other than Vermouth-Erzalord.

zap He felt... like there's some pain that transmitted into his heart.

The thing that raised inside of his heart, his uncontrollable love for her.

The cold that made his cold body even colder than before, the deep hatred.

Love and hate.

The first emotion that came to oneself, when they broke the wall between the love and hate which was supposedly on the different side of the coin.

It's like the feeling of confusion when someone that you hold dear from the depth of your heart, stabbed you with a knife, the feeling of chaos.

The feeling that one wouldn't be able to process, unless they're already broken.

Perhaps because of the side effect of the dead man who wander in this world for a long period of time.

Or perhaps because he embraced a feeling against the king of all undead race, Vermouth.

Himuro Takahina, more than half of himself was already broken.

Inside the scenery that reflected in his eyes.

Vermouth slightly opened her lips, emitting voice from her mouth.

That's an ultrasonic sound, so only Takahina could perceive.

While using her magic, this was how she activates her spells.

...Vermouth, was not really good at using magic.

Now that he got an aptitude for magic, and more than that after seeing the high grade magic from the demon race with his own eyes.

He understood the magic that she was using wasted too much magic power and her spell was rough, her accuracy and efficiency were not really that high.

But she was a rank 9 monster. No matter how bad she was at using magic, with her enormous magical power it will give enough effect to those lower ranking.

If it's monster that resided within the deep red prairie... it'll be more than enough.

And thus, around her, the monsters started to gather.

Night wolf, Big tarantula, sword lion, serpent, Man-eater, were-cat, werewolf, lamia, half dragon.

The number of races that gathered was 20. Half of the race that lived inside the prairie, gathered.

[.....?]

Suddenly, Takahina felt a Deja vu.

The amount. These races.

Somewhere, he felt like he knew about it.

[.....fu ~ uuh]

Vermouth that was emitting the supersonic sound from her mouth, stopped and she took a breath.

And then.

She laughed.

the corner of her lips raised, and then made a crescent moon.
Such a cruel smile, Takahina had never even once saw it.

[Ki]

Faintly, with low voice.

[Il]

With a slow, calm sound.
She must have gathered them with such kind of hypnotism.

[it]

To those monster's brain, she engraved an order.

With sluggish movements, those monsters started to move in different directions.

And then..... they disappeared into the prairie.

.....

.....

...

crackle

*crackle , crackle *

*crack, crackle , crackle , crackle *

*crack , crack crack crack crack crack crack

The cold air filled the room.

The one who stood in the center of that room, was an undead.

The walls frozen, the floor frozen, the ceiling frozen.

All of the item in that room were coated in ice and glittered in silver.

[.....]

Takahina opened his eyes wide.

grit, he gritted his teeth.

He stood still in the middle of the chaos.

Snap

It's not the sound that was coming from inside the room, another kind of sound was reaching his ears.

Snap

snap, *snap*

snap

*snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**sn
ap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap*
*snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**sn
ap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap*
*snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**sn
ap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap*
*snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**sn
ap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap**snap* -----

----- *crack*

[..... kh]

From his back, a sound of the door being opened could be heard.

However, such a thing was not important.

He knew.

He will end up knowing about it.

It's better if he didn't know about it

Just like a sin, just like a curse, just like a repentance, just like an apology, just like a screech, just like a lament, just like struggle, just like how everything that are not important.

He, stood stock still.

In a daze.

He realized, that the sound that he just heard.

It was the sound of his heart breaking.

The ice, melted

To that man who seemed to about to vanish after showing his back to her, Merlan tried to call out to him.

However, she cannot open her mouth.

She had searched for him but wasn't able to find him, and after passing each other since 1 and a half year ago.

The emotion inside her chest, the feeling that piled up wanted to flood out.

If she was able to say the first word, then surely the next words will come out one after another just like a waterfall and she wouldn't be able to close her mouth.

But that one word.

The first word, she could not say it out.

It felt like each of her words is fighting with each other, and now they're like stuck in the middle of her throat.

It's vexing, frustrating.

She cursed at her own mouth, which wouldn't move, it was the opposite of what her true feelings wished for.

To think that she was this much of a poor talker.

She thought so.

[.....]

For now, since she couldn't call out to him, she thought of coming close to him.

As she put her foot forward, so that she can begin her steps.

So that she could touch him, she moved her hand forward.

But then,

[----- Don't come any closer.]

With the cold voice, she stopped.

[I don't know who you are, but I know you're behind me. Fortunately, you're half a step outside the effective range. That's why, any more than that, don't come any closer.]

The cold that surrounded the room, increased once again.

The stone statue that was near him, broke apart with high pitched sound.

Without moving a muscle, Merlan just gazed at the man's back.

While she still didn't know what she should do, as he pondered over his words that were lingering in her ears.

That one day in the past where they met each other, the conversation that they had at that time.

All of those conversations played in her ears, the voice that she finally heard after one and a half years.

[Kh..... ah.]

Finally, Merlan's voice returned to her.

While the coldness that felt like pricking her skin, crawling around her body, Merlan tried to yarn out a word.

[Umm ---- --]

[don't say anything. It may look like this, but it's already hard for me to stop my body from moving with just your presence alone]

Crack crack crack

With a strong grip that was clearly inhuman, the man clenched his fists.

The confused atmosphere around him a while ago faded, and little by little changed into something else.

[Honestly, I'm not in the mood to choose my opponents anymore. The ones that are reflected in my eyes, even the one who just entered my attacking range, anyone.]

It's horrible but so easy.

It was horribly shaken by sadness.

It was horribly swollen by anger

That, while being an undead, he wished for kindness, he wished for warmth, that was him in the past.

But now, something's different, Merlan felt.

.....If by any chance.

If she, in one of the time or twice when they passed by each other.

No. if at this place, she could have met him sooner.

Perhaps, the fate of the 2-people's will,

the fate of these two who will never meet again forever after this, perhaps will change into something different.

But, that's all just an IF scenario.

In reality, Merlan was too late.

His, Himuro Takahino's heart.

Was already, broken.

Then, the way to fix that, Merlan didn't have.

[..... Aah.]

From above.

Looking at the ceiling, Takahina let out a mutter as if he's sighing.

[What should I do, I wonder what I should do?]

It seemed like he's asking, a question at nobody.

He's asking.

At no one but himself, he was asking what he should do.

He ended up knowing about it.

Takahina ended up knowing about it.

The reason, why he was looking around the entire world like this.

Half of that reason was to resurrect Misha.

The truth about her death.

The one who gave death to the one who he considered as his own cute little sister.

The one who he yearned and loved for, killed his little sister that he adored and loved.

Anger, sadness, resentment.

The feeling that went past all those things, filled him to the brim.

[Nee-san, nee-san. Aah, vermouth nee-san]

A word like he was forming a poem.

But the tone, was flat.

From his blue eyes, tears started to fall.

Without letting out a sob, Takahina said.

[I cannot love you anymore.]

In an instant, his back was covered with ice.

The thing that appeared, a pair wings that were made of thin ice crystals.

While looking up, with tears still lingering in his eyes.

Takahina raised his right hand, with his palm as it's center, he recited a magical aria.

[< I stole that body of yours, thus "I" will steal the hearts of yours>]

Without a tone, he recited.

[---- < till death tears us apart (AMNESIA) >]

Resounded, a thunderous roar.

The huge sharp icicle that pierced through the ceiling, without leaving any trace and disappeared.

The vast sky full of the stars, without having anything hindering it spread.

He squatted.

The moment he was about to soar into the sky.

[Wa --- --- wait !!]

A voice that he missed for a long time, could be heard from his back.

But for him, it doesn't matter anymore.

But even so, since there's a presence that tried to walk into his place.

[I had already told you not to speak... not to come any closer]

Without even turning his back, he took off while throwing the magical lock and chain from his pocket.

* Clang * with that sound, it seemed that the lock restricted someone.

[Gyaah !! ?]

Thump The sound of someone falling to the ground.

As he flapped his wings.

His tears scattered and danced in the air.

I hate fate

Without a reason, he just didn't want to stay at that place.

With just that little reason, Takahina's heart was a total mess that it was hard for him to even maintain his wings.

That's why, his speed fell as he half fell.

Without even looking for proper foothold, he just landed.

[Guuh..... aa, aaah.....]

And then suddenly... No, it's more appropriate to call it, finally.

He started to let out sobbing sound, that came out late after his tears.

Without being able to stand.

With his four limbs on the earth, and the moment he was about to crouch.

[.....Oh my]

That voice, sounded like someone who was already tired of waiting,
in his warped sight, Takahina turned his face towards that voice.

[You're late, you know. It's not very admirable to make a girl wait, no?]

That line, it was as if someone was scolding their lover who was late to their date.
Ursula-pendragon, *swirl* rotated on the spot like she was dancing.

With a broken heart, and a messy mind.

Even when he could faint at any moment right now, Takahina stood up.

His appearance, was that of an empty weak man.

Ursula's lips, floated a faint smile.

[What happened? You seem to be weaken quite a lot. Seems degenerate, but it's beautiful.]

[.....At time, like this..... I always, meet with you at the worst time, eh.]

Was there any trick behind it, and so Takahina wanted to make sure of it, but unfortunately, he didn't have a way to do so.

He didn't even have a separation magic item with him after all, in either case he can just give up.

On the top of that.....

[Kuuh..... my body, can't move, like I, want it to.]

The thing that manipulated magical power is, one's mind.

The mind also means, one's emotion, in other words, one's heart.

When one losses their composure, then their magical power will also get disordered.

Furthermore, the undead race, moved their body with magical power.

It's a matter of course, for Takahina to have his movement dulled.

[.....? Can't you move?]

While tilting her head, Ursula walked to Takahina's side.

Takahina who was barely able to stand up, still trying to take step backwards.

[So, you really cannot move, eh?]

Slowly, she extended both of her hand toward his face.

Then.

[Nhhhn]

Their lips, met.

[Nnhhhn..... slurp, ah.....]

She slipped her tongue into Takahina's mouth, and for Takahina who couldn't even move, he just get licked.

An obscene sound resounded. Heat and coldness that mingled with each other.

After a minute seemed to have passed, Ursula looked reluctantly with her tongue stretch outside, separated their face.

[Kuh.....]

[Fufufu..... this is the best.....]

Her eyes flickered with lust.

That girl who have unparalleled beauty, speak flirtatiously to Takahania.

[If you cannot move, before I kill you... It's alright, if I enjoy my time with you while I can still do it, right.....?]

Saying that, that girl once again connected their lips together.

To that person she absolutely hates, but at the same time she had the same yearning feeling to him.

Thus, what she desired for him was violation. She will violently hit him with her love, and kill him.

Because, by doing so she can finally express her true feelings for him after all.

Even if she ended up doing something evil to him later due to her hatred, she will still have her love burning for him after all.

If she let herself fall for her own love, she will get burned by her own hatred after all.

That's why she, Ursula.

Will express her love with her lips.

Will show her hatred with her knife.

All that, if it had to say it is called a demonic act.

And then ---- that wish, that hope

Will not be able to come true.

[Ursula san! Duck!]

Suddenly she heard, a rude yelling voice.

Ursula smacking her lips, quickly bend over.

And then ----

spaaa

[kah..... hah , akh.....! !]

Suddenly appeared in that place, that someone.

Slashed over, Takahina's back.

With a silver sword, that shone brilliantly.

---- The [holy sword]

Gathered, gathered

The young person, thought himself as someone special.
That he was different from the other people around him.
That he was someone chosen.
Due to his age, his sight is narrow.
Because he was young thus he was ignorance, he was reckless.

That youngster likes the word [talent] that people always said to him,
that the youngster surpassed others,
that the youngster was better than other people.
Indeed, that was indeed a wonderful thing.
However, the youngster should not forget this.

That people, always carve for something that they didn't have.
They who assessed the youngster as someone special, the one who assessed the
youngster as a talented person,
were the one who are far beyond from special and talented, the youngster should not
forget about that.

Takahina who got his back slashed, fell down lying face-down.
Since his body of ice and being undead means there will not be blood flowing out of
his wound, despite the wound itself was deep.
More than that, perhaps the magical power that was cut by the [holy sword] that ate
magical power was great.

As if he returned to being just normal corpse, he stopped moving.

[.....ah]

Capturing that scene with her eyes.

Ursula whose face was flushed, all of the heat on her face just disappeared in the blink of eyes.

To the extent that her face turned pale, the vitality lost from her face.

A man, drawing closer to that girl in that condition.

If excluding the black hair that's rare in this world, other than his shallow face there's nothing else worth mentioning about him, the very picture of a normal person, his looks was that of a young boy, Kokonoe Shinya.

The hero who's summoned and called as the trump card against the demon lords by the country which was created by the hero in the past, Mashanoises.

While putting back the holy sword in his hand, he talked to Ursula.

[Are you alright, Ursula -san ?]

[.....oh my..... Kokonoe, san. why are you, here?]

Without realizing Ursula who became pale, Kokonoe with high pride puffed his chest highly.

[Well, when I was about to sleep, my holy sword seems to react to something. When I came to this place, I saw Ursula-san getting attacked by some kind of monster, I quickly dashed here!]

He triumphantly said.

...This Kokonoe Shinya guy, he sometimes acted like this.

Without any basis, he deeply believed that what he's doing is something that's already been confirmed to be true.

On the top of that, he will never admit any wrongdoing on himself, and always making the excuse of what he's doing.

Though the time they moved together were short, but she understood.

Thoughtlessness and shallow ability, he was a man who didn't know his place.

A man like this was the hero, this world's will not last long.

Behind her smile, Ursula gave such evaluation to him.

[...Doing such unnecessary, thing.]

[Eh? Ursula-san, did you say something?]

[Kh..... No, nothing. thank you very much, thanks to you, I've been saved.]

Though there's smile floating on her face, deep inside her heart, she was looking at him coldly.

However, for Ursula who's none other than just a nun, she has close to none battle power in her.

She cannot hope to kill this man who's somehow or another a [hero], in direct confrontation.

Though she was a lunatic, she's not a fool.

She wouldn't let her rage show her true nature, and act that ignite hostility of Kokonoe.

If she wanted to stab him, then it will be from back.

For her who was a weakling, a fang is not something to show around but something that's hidden.

And thus, Ursula.

[Hmm? Eh, the holy sword was still glowing... be careful, Ursula-san. That monster, it's still alive.]

With the sword that glowing on its blade on his hand, of all thing, Kokonoe was about to give finishing blow to Takahina.

[umm, Kokonoe-san.]

She stopped him.

And then.

[Yes? What is it, Ursula-sa --- ---]

Shinya cannot continue his words till the end.

...After all, his neck which didn't have any protection and he wasn't being cautious about it, Ursula stabbed it with the knife.

His pupil widened, Shinya crumbled onto the dirt.

Surely it was an instant death. He didn't even twitch, there's just a puddle of red forming with his body at its center.

The holy sword in his hand pierced the ground, and before long became light and disappeared.

Possibly that holy sword, was something similar to that of a spirit sword that didn't actually have any physical form and is created from the user's life force.

In such condition, but Ursula didn't even turn her back to look at him again.

She walked through the puddle of blood, and walked towards takahina who's back was slashed.

As if saying, that it was something that so precious to her.

She, hugged Takahina's head.

[.....Hmm?]

A girl, who walked alone towards the city in the night.

Suddenly stopped, tilting her head.

[Eh? Seriously, that fool is dead?]

While looking listless, that girl put her hand forward.

After that, in an instant light gathered at the tip of her hand.

And then, after it's settled down.

In that little girl's hand, one piece of the sword came in her grasp.

[To think that he died without achieving anything, really useless person. If he wanted to die, please just die after killing one of the demon kings or something like that.]

swing *swhing*

with that small hand of hers, an unexpected speed and precision.
she swung the sword.

[It seems, over there there's someone who are fighting with each other, too... aah.]

Looking irritated, thinking that it's bothersome from the depth of her heart.

A slightly different place from the city she aimed at, she can clearly feel an indication of a fight.

[Truly, bothersome ~]

That girl, breathe out a sigh.

The power capable of destroying the world

[I'm beat ~]

The queen lilith, Marietta- Nightgale was stumped.

When she looked down, her favourite dress that's tailored with thin fabric, were tattered.

When she looked around, the dense forest with thick trees that grew within it, disappeared without a trace left.

[I don't have any chance of wining.]

[<Your majesty!>]

At the same time when she heard Stella's scream, Marietta snapped her fingers. Instantly, Marietta's body swayed as if it was mist.

[Tch ! !]

That appearance that had already lost its physical body, had already turned into an illusion was slashed by Vermouth, then Vermouth clicked her lips while irritated.

But, with just that.

Marietta's presence that had already appeared somewhere quite distanced from Vermouth, already showing fatigue that couldn't be hidden anymore.

[I think, it's better if you, show some restrain, you know.]

While making a big sigh, she muttered.

Between Marietta and Vermouth, there was simply difference in power that cannot be measured.

The second demon king and the fifth demon king.

A vampire that specialized in battle, and lilith who was good at grasping opponent's weakness but in a fight, it falls behind to that of the vampire.

An immortal that has already lived for more than 800 years, against the someone who had just lived for less than 100 years, in other words, she was just a little girl compared to Vermouth.

Marietta fell behind in true ability, ability composition, experience, all of that. The fact that she had never fought someone with a higher rank, also mattered a lot here.

If her servant Stella didn't mess with the atmosphere and made a strengthening barrier around her, it's not weird that Marietta would have already lost.

It's a mistake that she picked a fight with Vermouth, but even if she regretted it now, it's already too late.

[Stella ~ Just asking though, but can you make the barrier any stronger than the current one?]

[< Please don't jest with me. Maintaining the output right now is already the best I could do for now >]

Stella's answered through telepathy as she was striving to maintaining the barrier from the outside, it was not something that outside of Marietta's prediction.

Other than that, Stella right now was already forcing herself. The barrier is no other than the act to mess and temper with the atmosphere, adding with the danger of maintaining it for long period of time.

For a rank 8, even with the power of the semi-demon lord, midnight-succubus, doing more than this is going be hard.

[(Going do something ~ , anymore and it'll be bad)]

The only blessing was, the fact that Vermouth was blinded by rage and was only attacking in large swings, while evading those attacks, Marrieta thought.

[< The opponent's anti-magic is at a cheat level after all, the magical power on our side is almost depleted too..... Nggh ~ , if it's gonna be like this, I should have supplied more magical power ~ >]

Just like dancing, Marrietta parried, evaded, or warded off the claw attacks that came at her.

However, the difference in their martial arts was also clear, little by little, Suddenly on Marrieta's body, there was a red scratch.

[It hurts, hurts, hurts, hurts, huuuurts! What are you doing to a maiden's skin ! !]

[Shut up ! ! You'll become minced meat in the end, so just die already !]

Slash ! !

A slashing attack that came together with a roar like shout.

Robbed Marrieta of her long hair, it's strands were fluttering in the sky.

[----- Kh ! !]

Her hair, that was cut by the claw.

For her, it was her most prided thing, her peach coloured hair.

Furthermore, Marrieta got injured.

Snap, felt like something's snapped inside herself.

[How dare you..... HOW DARE YOU, TO MY HAIR !! !]

Marrieta who's hedonist and pleasure seeking, and thus she has very little negative expression like anger and such.

It's even appropriate to said that she have the kind of thought that angry was something bothersome, even doing that was something useless.

That's why, for Marrieta to reveal her anger like this, even Stella rarely witness something like that.

Due to the change in her emotion, her magical power also increased.

*Crack**Crack* her magical power turned into purple electric current-like running through her body, closing all the wounds on her body.

[STELLAAA !! Just for a moment, increase the output of your barrier !!]

[Ye, yes, understood.]

Sounds of glass breaking, resounded deep inside her ears.

Marietta made a huge leap behind.

She then pointed her palm toward vermouth.

[<< Embrace the thorny flower>>! << Destroyed by the reverse cross>>!]

As if being invited by the aria from somewhere, countless thorny shrub appeared.

All of them twined around Vermouth, for a couple of seconds, restricting her movements.

[Kuh!? Such, things -----]

[< turn turn turn turn turn around, stop stop stop stop stop it > !]

The air swayed.

Crack, something's creaking.

[.....< Star twinkled in the starless sky (PARADOX) > ! !]

Snap the sound of something's snapping.

Vermouth - Erzalord, was swallowed by the space.

It doesn't matter

The thing that I am worse at, is talking about the past.

My family consisted of my father, my mother, then lastly me.

My father was a very stern.

My mother was kind but only focuses on the details.

Since they were both busy with work, I was often left alone in the house when I was younger.

I didn't quite like being all alone.

I was a loner since the beginning, or at least that was what someone once told me.

But, I don't remember that I felt lonely when I was younger.

Even though there were no one at home except for me.

Even though, I shouldn't have any other family members besides my father and mother.

But then, there was always someone else.

Though I can't remember that person's name or face.

I felt like there was always someone else beside me.

I don't understand it and it hurts my head.

It has always been so.

Every time I tried to scavenge my memories, my head will consistently end up like this.

Every time I tried to think about it, my head will always hurt.

I am always alone.

No, there was certainly someone else besides me.

But, who? I don't know.

That's of course, after all, there's none.

No one, that I'm sure of.

That feeling at the back my mind, surely is just my imagination.

But, but.

That's.

Before long, I was tormented with headaches.

It hurts, it felt gross, I felt sick.

It seems that I was someone who smiled lot, but I don't know about it anymore.

After all, I had already forgotten about somethings about my past.

Since I kept on trying not to think about it, I ended up forgetting about it.

This is why, I will not think about it.

After all, it was just too bothersome.

[Whoops ~]

That girl who standing on the top of the trees casually jumped off and landed on the ground.

With the soft sound of her shoes stepping on the grass. That girl opened her feet shoulder-wide while placing her hand on her hips.

Even though the opponents were wounded, she was still about to fight with 2 demon lords alone.

Despite that, she still took that natural stance.

[How do you do, two demon lords, this lovely hero has made her appearance~]

With a bored-like voice, she spoke like she's holding out her yawn.

Looking uninterested, and unserious.

While it doesn't sound like she spoke monotonously with herself, but it still sounded like she was talking to the pebble on the side of the road.

She didn't need her opponent's answer, it's just a line that she wanted to say out loud.

With eyes filled with boredom, that girl looked at her surroundings.

A girl with a red sword, a girl in black and white maid cloths, and girl in a torn-up dress.

While there were differences, but they're all wounded.

Lastly, the girl tilted her head.

[Eeeeh ~ , that stupid Kokonoe isn't here though. Ah, did he died without even meeting one of the demon lords?]

She took a light sigh, and muttered, 'Whaaa, that fool really is useless'.

There's no grief that can be felt in her voice, only scorn.

Those were words that didn't hold any other meaning behind it.

Interception

The barrier was smashed.

The space that isolated the space within the barrier from the outside, returned to how it was before as if nothing happened.

...The forest that was engulfed in fire, stayed the same.

[Haah, haah..... Your majesty, are you alright?]

The space moved. Stella, who was doing her best preserving the barrier, appeared in front of Marrieta, who was standing still with her eyes cast down.

Stella must be really tired, her breath which was usually never thrown out of order no matter what happen are become faint and sweat could be seen on her temple.

On the contrary, Marrieta's condition was not clear.

She hung her face and her peach coloured hair covered her face like a curtain, completely hiding her expression.

But, her rage just a moment ago. Now that Stella looked closely, Marrieta's shoulders were trembling.

Finally ---

[Ugaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa !! I'm angry, angry, aaangryyy !! !]

She vigorously raised her face, with the force that seems to be able to move the heavens.

Showing out her rage, she roared with loud voice.

[HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT TAKE TO MAINTAIN THIS HAIR OF MINE, THAT CRAZY

BRUTE ! ? IT'S THREE HOURS, T H R E E H O U R S! HOW DARE SHE HURT MY HAIR !]

She scratched her head roughly, while stomping on the ground with great vigour.

Like a child, she letting out a tantrum without minding anything else.

Looking at Marrieta which was usually gentle... or rather easy going, looking for fun and optimistic, making Stella to stare in amazement.

[What's with that woman!! Just because she's bit pretty, she's getting carried away!

The heck's with that, is it that weird lisp or that hiragana language, she uses that to seduce man, huh!?!]

[Your majesty!? Please calm yourself, you have already strayed from your reason!]

[The heck's with blonde! My hair is goddamn Pink you know, come at meeee!!]

Marrieta became weird perhaps because she was rarely being mad, she kept screaming around.

On top of the thing that, she was that she was different from the reason of her anger, it's also inconsistent.

No. she always inconsistent about things, but this time it is worse than usual.

Perhaps her hair getting plucked being the trigger, Marrieta continued throwing abusive word towards vermuth in a fast-talking manner at her heart's content.

[Who give damn about beauty with big boobs, none shalt defeat a Loli! In the end, time after time they will always choose Lolis you know!!]

Rather, it's close to the truth about the world!

Yet again, Stella thought that it's too overly hasty to decided it just like that.

[.....Your majesty.]

[Loli with big breasts are the best, I'm sure if all of the male in the world were to choose, it will win in a huge victory! Immorality will never win over anyone you know!!]

[...For what reason is your majesty angry, I am already lost.]

Stella looking at her own master with pitiful eyes.

It seems, that Marrieta was holding great animosity against Vermouth, who is by possibility more beautiful than Marrieta.

At the time when Stella thought that it's about the time, for sanity to return back into Marrieta's head who was already getting heated up for some quite time already.

----- Crack, craaassshhh !!

[Kh!?]

[uwu?]

Just like thick glass breaking into pieces.

The sound of something hard but brittle broke into pieces, resounded around the already destroyed forest.

As the girls were wondering where the sound came from while looking towards the source of the sound, what they saw were ---- two feet.

They were slender and beautiful white feet, that kicked the border between time and space from another dimension.

A hole that's just barely big enough for an adult male's head to pass through, appeared through the space.

Both Marrieta and Stella, opened their eyes wide in shock without being able to utter a word.

While at it, the feet slowly returned into the hole.

But then.

CRASHHHH!!

One more time, the impact.

The wall between the dimension, which is supposedly impossible to destroy by physical strength.

This time, a hole which was big enough for a person to easily pass through it, opened up.

[No way... even though I should throwed her off to another completely different dimension that once you go in, you'll never return, even it's impossible for me alone to connect these two place.]

At the edge of that hole, five fingers with a sharp claw on each, grasping it.

At the same time, the space started to restor itself, the broken fragment started to fasten each other and closed the hole.

Perhaps perceiving it as annoying.

*slash ** slash **slash*

Three slashes of a red sword.

the blade that showed only an instant, but it contained an amazing magic power in it. Even the dimension wall was slashed into piece like it was cutting a fruit.

[...Cursed sword... Furthermore, it is a strong one that's more powerful than norm.]

[Don't kid with me! My magic is already empty you know!]

On the other side of marrieta who shouted with a slight tear in her eyes.

Smashed, slashed, torn to pieces.

Forcefully destroying space itself, the monster that crossed the wall between the two worlds.

Vermouth, came back from the space she was thrown into.

Easily and quickly.

As if, she just had a little walk.

[.....]

But, as expected, being thrown into another dimension effected her consciousness a little.

Her eyes which was soaked with red because of anger just a moment ago, had the calmness returned to it.

However, her animosity didn't reduce even one bit.

In the end, Marrieta's act only brought back Vermouth composure.

[...I will kill you. You whom sullied my Takahina, definitely.]

[Awawawa. What should we do now, Stella, we're in pinch you know.]

[Unfortunately, My magical power also empty. If your majesty was able to gain time about 2 minutes, there's still possibility for us to run away]

[No way! Nevertheless 2 minutes, I can't even hold her for 10 second you know!]

Behind Marrieta who swinging her head left and right, there's Stella that tried to knead her magic.

The vampire emperor took one step forward and then another, with a red sword that was able to slash through anything in her hand, toward those girls.

And then, the moment she wanted to dash towards them to enter her range.

Between the both side, a silver sword was pierced.

[Kh!!]

[Wha, what!?!]

Vermouth who dashed forward, with only her legs power jumped to the back.
On the top of the handle of that silver sword,
stood a girl.

[Yaay, I found it. furthermore two at the same time, ain't it? What an amazing member we have here, to be honest, I wanted to skip this.]

While standing on top of unstable sword's handle, the girl made a rotation.

This was the confrontation between two demon lords and the hero.

The gear accelerated to this is the moment, the beginning of the event that could possibly affect the world.

Paper-thin difference

[Hey, the moon is beautiful, right?]

While bathing under the moon light, the woman suddenly said with a smile on her face.

Her appearance, was that of a doll.

[Yep, it's so beautiful, it makes me want to destroy it you know ~]

Ahahahahaha, she laughed unamusedly.

The girl, Takahina Mayu.

[Also, though it doesn't matter. ~]

Noticeably, unamusedly.

[Is the demon lord, really this weak, I mean are you guys are mobs?]

She stepped on vermouth's head, whose body was full of scars.

It's horrible, the situation was terrible.

Getting out from the closed space, Vermouth used up lots of magic power.

In the battle with Vermouth, Marietta who's cornered near to her limits.

Maintaining the strengthening barrier, Stella who was not in the condition to enter a battle.

If, the three of them were in their best shape, and in the condition where they can show their true power without any problem.

The one who grovel in the ground will be Mayu.

...However, the girl right now can't even take out 20% of their true power.

The result, by the hand of the one who have extraordinary power among the human. they were defeated, by the hero.

[...As I thought, series of battles is tough, to be defeated by a human, it's quite humiliating you know.] - Marrieta

[It's my blunder.] - Stella

While leaning against the three, she muttered so while pressing the hole that goes through her abdomen with her hand, the fifth demon lord, Marrieta.

While blood spilled from her mouth, for her to maintain her usual composure, perhaps it is the last pride of hers.

Getting close to her, Stella who stood with shaking legs, also have her body full of scars.

So that the blood won't flow from her neck that got cut, she stopped the bleeding with magic.

[Kuh.....]

[Stella, stop it. if you move more than that, you'll seriously died you know, it's better

for you to just stay quiet.]

In reality, Marrieta's wounds were deeper than Stella's.

Nevertheless, for her to try to stand up, it's already hard for Marrieta to just retain her consciousness.

And then.

The one who difference between their [demon race] which is living being, the [undead race]'s king which proud of it's bizzare toughness.

vampire emperor , Vermouth-erzalord's body.

already in precarious state.

[this is the second demon lord ? the world second strongest being ? eh, a gag?]

lying faced down , Mayu looking puzzled stepped on vermuth head who already can't even move her finger.

vermouth didn't even have any magic power left to even move her body.

she was sliced many time with the natural enemy for monster, a sword that stole the magic power of the thing that it cut , the [holy sword]

having her magical power eaten until exhausted, the only thing that vermuth can wait is slow death.

but the hero is not that patient, to wait for that long.

[well, for me it's good since I can take it easy. but just in case, maybe I should gave finishing blow ~]

she plucked out the holy sword that pierced the ground near her, and held it with

underhand grip.

then, she pointed it right at vermouth's back.

[ah, just wait for 5 more second alright. After I finished with this, I will try my best to finish you guys too , alright ~]

[...well, that's not really ---- *cough* *cough* *cough* !]

[her majesty !]

without even looking towards marrieta who's vomiting blood, mayu raised her sword. on the holy sword's blade, a pale silver light started to appeared.

[- what it's aim is the body, what it's pierce is the soul, what it's celebrate is the mortality -]

perhaps the word that she said boredly in monotone is the mantra to draw out the holy sword's power.

but no matter what it is, vermouth's life, which is about to dissapear at any moment. the whirlpool of power that can be said too much for her condition right now is about to crush her life.

---- however.

[then ----- kh !! ?]

that's perhaps a miracle that's created by someone.

or perhaps, just a chance.

mayu's expression who's about to thrust her sword downward.

clearly showing a, [pain].

[aaah ----- khhaaaa ---- kh !!]

well then , right here, let's talk about a story that vermouth and the other didn't know.
the hero that's summoned by mashanoisaz.

the hero that that kingdom's summon at first was , Takahina Mayu.

though her personality and character bring quiet problem for them , but she have enough talent to become [the choosen one] which is the end road of a hero.

(TL : actually it's Eiyuu , which mean hero , but so that it didn't make confusion , I just translate it as the choosen one uwu;)

however, there's exist one problem that cannot be solved.

that is..... [headache]

if himuro mayu were using her body for extensive battle for more than 20 minutes, then she will assaulted by violent headache and make her totally useless.

that why ,mashanoisaz's king wished for another spare which is no proble if it's downgraded in quality but in exchange it's can be used without any problem.

and that's kokonoe shinya.

[Aaah, AAaaaaaaah !! Damn it , it's hurts, it's hurts, damn it !!]

throwing away her sword, mayu frantically pressed her head.

opposite to how she screwing around and looking uninterested all the time, she shout from the bottom of her lungs and run toward the forest.

[Uwaaah , Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah , AAaaaaaa !! !]

while she screamed, she desperately stretch her hand.

after quite a time, she able to grab the handle of the holy sword.

a pain on her head that like there's crack opening on her head, and tears flowed from her eyes.

[thi, this o , one ---- [this one call upon peace] ! ! !]

while leaving a big conspicuous light.

the hero, takahina miyu.

leaving the demon lords in that place alone thinking that they will eventually died even is she leave her alone.

with victory in her mind --- she dissapeared , somewhere.

because of that time out, her fate in the future will change greatly.

so great.

to the extent that it will invloved , the continent , even the world in it.

it will change.

The Last Wish

[...I don't really get what just happened ~ but it's alright to think that we're just saved, right?]

[Possibly so... more than that, your majesty , we must quickly retreat your ---- Kuh]

Stella who tried to move her body, groaned while grabbing her neck.

From the gap between her fingers, blood started to drip.

[Like I said, you need to stay down. You got a really grave wound after all.]

[However... Your majesty's wound , too... not something that, can, be left alone]

[Aah, it's alright, it's alright.]

To Stella's words who's filled with worry, Marrieta easily said.

As is there's nothing wrong with it.

[After all, I cannot be saved anymore.]

As she said, she can't be saved.

She glanced at her own body which was covered in blood.

[--- --- --- Ukh]

Even Stella, while gritting her teeth till it cracked.

She didn't even get angry nor deny Marrieta's word.

After all, she understood.

While her wound is indeed deeper than Marrieta's

But Marrieta's wound was more fatal than hers.

If Stella quickly treated herself, she still can be saved.

But no matter how they struggle, Marrietta will not be able to be saved.

[It seems stabbed in the stomach is the end for me you know. The rest of my magical power were sucked dry, I can't even regenerate the skin]

Marrieta laughed.

However, from her body, from her eyes.

The sign of life, slowly started to dim and almost disappeared.

[Your majesty.....!]

[Why do, you make that, kind of face ~. A beauty, shouldn't cry..... except... in front of a man, you know?]

Her usual expressionless face that never changed broke and now tears streaming down from Stella's eyes.

Marrieta, tried to remove those tears from Stella's eyes... but, her hand won't move.

[Sheesh... by the way, are you still alive ?]

[.....]

As if she just finally remembered about it, Marrieta shifted her eyes.

In her line of sight, lying down without moving a bit... Vermouth was there.

Her sliced skin along with her clothes seems painful, however there's no spec of blood flowing from her body make her appearance seems bizarre.

Vermouth already long since died, and perhaps Mayu was having misunderstood and that scar was something that was carved into a corpse.

However, a moment after she was called.

With a movement like a rusted old toy, she only moved her head.

[.....Hmph, just like you. 5 minutes more, I would have just became a normal corpse.]

[That's terrible. The whole world's fifth demon lord... will soon become the fourth ~
Look, queen Lilith will take over, after all.]

[I just don't care anymore.]

Even though they will disappear from this world before long.

Vermouth looking really uninterested and looked like she doesn't care about anything anymore.

[I just, don't care about it anymore alright... after all, I can't meet with Takahina again,
even if I was able to meet him, he will surely reject me once again]

[Eeeh ~ perhaps, the vampire lord, got dumped?]

[Kh! Shu, shut up!]

She raised her voice, but there's no power at all in it.

Marrieta looking at that powerlessly laughed.

[I don't really know what you've done, but I'm sure it'll be fine. He is kind after all. To
the extent that it makes him look pitiful.]

[...Even I, know that]

[If you die here, surely he will be sad. After all he's kind. He's foolishly kind that he's
felt sad whenever someone or something died in front of him you know.]

For Marrieta, those words were something that were worth nothing.

However.

vermouth who heard her words, opened her eyes wide.

[..... So, that's it. That's right, that's it.]

Why he, left her side.

why he, rejected her.

Finally. Finally, she understood.

When she thought about it, Takahina was indeed a weird undead.

For an undead, he's fixated with life, he was a weird man.

So that's it.

He, was disgusted with me, who casually robbed other beings of their life without a care.

When she realized about it, it was a simple thing.

From Vermouth's eyes, a tear started to flow.

[Is it me, who's stupid, or Takahina's the one who's foolish...]

She couldn't see anything.

That's right. She didn't see other things.

The only thing that reflected in her eyes was Takahina's appearance who laughed with her.

His heart, his thought, none of them ever entered into her sight.

[I... never realize any of it.]

Takahina was a fool

If he didn't want me to kill anything, he just had to say it.

I was stupid.

After all, I never tried to realize Takahina's troubles and sufferings.

And then.

[The time I realized it, it's already the end for me... huh. it's just like me, what a stupid... way to come to a close to my life]

Using her last power, Vermouth looked into the sky.

The crescent moon , was beautiful.

[Fuuh... If, if there's a chance. I can start this, once again.]

With trembling hand, she stretched it, further, forward.

gyuut She grasped the aid.

[This time, for sure --- ---]

--- *Cluck*

without finishing her line.

The power, left her hand.

she closed her eyes.

[.....Hmm.]

As if seeing her off.

A gentle smile appeared on Marrieta's face.

Slowly. The flame inside her.

The last bit of it, no matter how small it was.

She gave it to her servant in front of her.

While wishing for her, to keep on living.

She closed the curtains of her live.

A woman who mistaken feeling of possessiveness with love, toward one man.

in the last minutes of her life, realized her own feeling.

By the time she realized it, it's real, the first love inside her heart.

A slight, warmth feeling.

Wrapped with warmth, she disappeared.

Distant, the passing wish

She second demon lord, Vermouth Erzalord met her death.

Inside her corpse that meet gentle death, whom the hero didn't finish off.

Just a little, a tiny bit.

The magical power that the holy sword didn't absorb, left.

At the last moment, her magical power who wish to be together with Himuro Takahina.

Was sent towards, him.

[Please wake up... come on, wake up.....]

Inside the town that was engulfed in silence, the plaza.

Ursula who was hugging onto Takahina's body which didn't show any sign to opening its eyes, kept muttering those line with a feeble voice.

[This is, this is too much... If it's not by my hands, if you're not died by my hands, there's no meaning to it.....]

Her body kept on hugging onto his body which was coiled in cold air, was attacked by severe frostbites.

Drowsiness attacked her body, the pain of heat and coldness that mixed together. However, she didn't release Takahina.

From his wound which was caused by the holy sword, his magical power keep pouring out.

she understood that there's no way to heal it.

While tears flowed down her cheeks, Ursula greatly regret her powerlessness.

While she was like that. Something emitted light.

[.....?]

Without even wiping the tears on her cheeks, Ursula raised her head.

It's not, the moonlight. The light that looked like stardust, poured down onto them.

Finally, as if it's absorbed into Takahina's body, the light dissolved.

At the same time, she realized that it was magical power.

Ursula's body was blown away because of sudden impact that come together with the light.

[Kyaah!!?]

The light, wrapped around Takahina's body.

No. Takahina's body was emitted light, despite him still being unconscious.

[Wha, what was that.....? What, is happening...?]

Not able to follow what's happening, Ursula looked perplexed.

Meanwhile, the light became stronger, finally covering his whole body.

[Undead-Ice Angel] Himuro Takahina

Current magical aggregate ammount / Magical power connotation limit: 44 / 9959

※The magical power inside fell below operation limit. Please take magical power from outside as soon as possible.

※Completing absorbing a small amount of high grade magical power. The magical power inside fell below operation limit.

※Automatically absorbing magical power from the surrounding. Analyzing material possible for absorption.

※ Founding material possible for absorption. Qualified item, 3 items.

※ Absorbing magical power from [Reverse reverse] [Shadow gate] [The judge]

※ Finished on absorbing magical power. Current magical aggregate amount, 15345,

※According to Vermouth Erzalord's magical power, Magical power's nature encroachment, all of the absorbed magical power became Takahina's.

※98% of magical power inside were high grade magical power. Correction on magical power's Magical aggregated amount value.

※ Amendment completed. Current magical aggregate amount, 79278.

※The magical aggregate amount exceed the current limit. Starting the rank up.

※ Possessing the fixed amount of high quality of magical power. Rank increased from rank 4 to rank 7.

※ Special condition [Absorbing demon lord's magical power] has been completed. Rank Increased from rank 7 into rank 9.

※ Due to the current rank exceed Himuro Takahina growth limit. Rank down from rank 9 to rank 8.

※The Emotion level showing high despair. Attribute changed from [Ice] into [Ice - Chaos]

※The Emotion level showing high despair. Race changed from [Undead - angel race] into [Puppet race]

※ Due to race change, Skill [Angel Breath] Lost

※ Due to race change, Skill [Ice wing Misha] Lost

※ Due to race change, Skill [Cursed Sword Lost Fang] Lost

※ Due to the rank up, [Profess] transformed into [Professor]

- ※ Due to the rank up, skill [Misery] acquired.
- ※ Due to the rank up, skill [Magic Potion constitution] acquired.
- ※ Salvaging the last piece of memory failed. Performing process on the seal from the outside.
- ※ Mental breakdown reaching lever 6/10. Starting restoration.
- ※ Restoration failed. Fixation on mental breakdown level.
- ※ All mentioned above in the middle of processing. Please wait a moment.
- ※ All processes finished. Restating consciousness.

Was it 1 second, 1 minutes, or perhaps one hour.

After a vague time have passed, the dazzling light slowly dispersed.

At that time, Ursula realized that the pain she could feel from her body disappeared.

She was healed. Perfectly.

The effect of the light or perhaps something else.

Her body returned to how it was, to a beauty body that it should be.

But, without even having time to minding about that.

From inside the light, something stood up.

[----- ---- Kh]

For an instant, Ursula's heart felt stirred up.

It's truly just for an instant. By the time she blinked, that feeling was already gone.

Slowly, that thing turned around.

[I cured your frostbites. I have too much debt, to you.]

That something, was Himuro Takahina, at the same time it's not Takahina.

His physical appearance was no different from before. The clothes that he wore as well.

The shine on its inorganic white hair increased, even the faint moon light reflected many times of its light.

His undead like body, the pale body has disappeared and was replaced with white porcelain like skin.

looking at him who's now clad in something overwhelmingly different than he used to be, almost made Ursula cried.

Not because the man that she chased changed into something totally different.

But the fact that his change, looks really pitiful.

For her, who possibly the only one, knowing the true meaning of his appearance, made her want to cry.

Race : Undead Ice Doll

Species : Doll

Attribute : Ice - Chaos

Rank : 8

Individual Name : Himuro Takahina

Current magical aggregate amount : 79278

At first, he who's just an undead.

What came after was coldness, then he became an angel.

And now, he became a doll.

It wasn't even a corpse, it was just a doll.

That man, who kept longing for life.

In the end, become a being that's furthest from thing called life.

Chapter 3

...I don't understand.

Nee-san, is dead.

Also, Marrieta died too.

The magical power that flowed into this body, vividly told me those things.

...I completely didn't understand.

I absorbed nee-san's magical power and all the magical items in my possession.

I was able to evolve to the final stage.

Into a doll, that's not even a corpse.

I am reduced to an, undead ice doll.

.....Why, why is it like this?

It seems, Stella was still barely able to hold onto her life.

But her wounds were quite deep, if left alone it will become fatal wound for her body.

It can't be helped. If I let her die here, I will regret it later, I will go and help her.

.....I can't comprehend it, I don't know what it meant.

Me, who tried to leave that place, was called by sister(nun).

Well, it does matter,..... but unfortunately, I didn't have any time to accompanying her.

Special magic, Proffes which evolved into Professor.

With the magical power of a semi-demon lord class, for the very first time I use it, the well of wisdom.

This magic which occasionally let me read the mind of my opponent in front of me, also giving me piercing alarm inside my head.

Stella's condition was a race against time.

.....I don't want to think about it.

In many ways, for me to turn my back on the sister whom I have a lot of to pay back, I felt sorry.

Even if I stay her for too long, we only will kill one another. Our relationship was like that.

Her only weapon was [purification] which is useless against me who's turned into doll.

But possibly, that thing doesn't really matter for her.

Surely, from now on, she will search another effective method to kill me.

And then, she will come to kill me.

.....Stop, my train of thought, Cut, Cut.

But that's a story for the future.

There's too much gap between the me and her right now, that it wouldn't even become a battle.

And possibly, sister also understood that.

She was certainly a lunatic, but at the same time, she was smart.

She wouldn't do it, the act of plunging her neck into a battle while having a 0% chance of winning.

While vexingly biting her lips, sister averted her eyes from me.

..... cut cut cut cut.

Without even responding to her, I tried to spread my wings just like I have always done.

But then I remembered that I have just lost my wings.

For me who has lost my angel attribute, I wouldn't be able to take out my wings.

The feeling of losing Misha, made me a little bit sad.

But right now was not the time to drowned in my emotions, and thus I straighten myself.

.....cut cut cut cut cut cut cut cut

Though there's more than one way to fly, but I wanted to try the thing that just cross my head.

Magic circle came from below my feet, I twist the space in front of my eyes.

After several seconds passed, I succeed in opening a hole that's just enough for me to pass through it.

Connect. That thing that both Stella and Marrieta used, a magic that's capable of creating a way from one space to another.

If I used this, I will be able to immediately arrived at Stella's location.

..... cut cut cut cut cut cut cut cut cut cut cut!

As I was about to put my feet into the hole that's created by connect.

For a while, I glanced at sister who was standing there.

She, didn't even try to look at me anymore.

In her hands was the thing that I probably dropped when I fainted, the [mirror of exposure].

Without even saying anything.

I disappeared into the gap between the space.

.....The faint crying voice that I heard from behind, I'm sure it was something that I had just misheard,

My thought, stop.

Avert your eyes, don't think about anything.

Why, why, why, why, why, why, don't think about it ! !

dammit, why I can't stop thinking about it, please stop, stop it, I beg you, please stop!!

Aah, it won't stop, why, how, why, why!!

why, why.

Even though, you are supposed to be death.

Why, you, the hero.

Why, why did it become like this.

I don't know anymore.

I don't know, what should I do.

Me, what I suppose to do?

Please, please tell me.

Mayu ----

Determination

Crank crank crank.....

Sounds of metal scrapping each other, resounded along with the sound of footsteps.
A high-pitched sound, that cool the atmosphere around.
While her back hunched a bit, Merlan slowly, walked.

[.....]

She got out from the mansion, passing through the gates.
Her eyes were blank, no one knew what she was thinking about.
Her usual firm but strong-willed gaze, now were only a shadow of the past.
Her hair which was tied to the back with the ribbon was undone, from afar she looked like a different person.

Drag along chains, she walked through the dark city street.
The moonlight shone upon her, despite it being a crescent moon.
The faint light that cannot be compared to the light of a full moon, made her appearance looked like a ghost.
Without saying anything, just the sound of the chains and her footsteps reverberated.

Crank crank crank crank.....

Thus, she stopped her footsteps.

That place, was the plaza that was right in the middle of the town.

Perhaps something happened, but things were broken in many places.

Merlan moved her head as if looking around the town plaza, kluk, then she tilted her head.

[.....]

She walked towards the place, where her sight locked onto.

It was the corpse of a human. Its neck was sliced really deep and was now drenched in a pool of blood.

Rare black hair, with that uncommon black cloth.

Merlan thought for a moment.

After several seconds passed, she realized that it was Kokonoe Shinya.

Even if she really didn't like that person, Kokonoe was by name still her friend.

But now he laid down, in completely different shape.

For a normal human who have sense of humanity, they will surely feel pain over this scene which none can get used to no matter how much death they had seen.

But, Merlan didn't even grimace a bit.

[.....]

Like a person who mistook a rock on the side of the road with something else, she quickly shifted her sight.

It seems, that her objective was already gone from this place.

As she sighed a little, she moved her body.

[As expected, you came]

With an unconcerned tone.

Since when, so Merlan thought for a bit.
Just a little moment ago, there's no one there.

[.....It seems, you're good at hiding, eh.]

Merlan's tone was nothing different from her usual tone.
That's why, she gave off something that can't be undone anymore.

[Half of my lifetime were met with disaster after all. It's necessary you know.]
[Zat so? Well, not like I care.]

To that person who just arrived..... Ursula, Merlan who talked with her didn't give any uncomfortable feelings.
She talked like she always do, she behaved like always, her expression was also no different from usual.

Except for, the numerous chains that're come out directly from her hand and legs.

[Hey, that person? You know about it right, tell me.]
[I won't tell you. After all, the current you, must never enter his sight.]

The chains that Takahina bound her with, are called [parasitism chain],
it will assimilate with the one it's cling to and give power to its user.
But as the compensation, the nature of the person will become grotesque.

Clank, Merlan raised both of her arms which were bound by the chains and smiled.

[Hmm? I don't really despise him about this body you know. I just, want to meet him,
I really want to.]
[It's not like that, well, I wonder if you could understand if I put it like this?]

To add the thing, Takahina didn't know about these chains.

It's just something that restricted the movement of the opponent.

Because of the incomplete profess, that's the only information that Takahina knew.

Ursula, she knew about that fact.

Also, more, other than that.

[.....You're, evil. To say it simply, you're just a nuisance.]

[You really said it straight to my face, eh. Rather, didn't your atmosphere changed?]

[My eyes had been opened, just take it like that. Anyways, I will remove that for you.]

The ring which become the medium for purification magic shone, Ursula stretched out her hands.

Merlan make crackling laugh, resounded along with the chains clacking.

[Stop it. This body, is so hungry, I can't stand it. Though you look bad, I will eat you till no bones left.]

[What can you do with that hand, that isn't even able to hold your bow anymore?]

Merlan's chains, were something that have magical power flowing in it, an antimatter.

Thus, it was something that Ursula can purified with her magic.

It's alright, I can win, Ursula convicted.

Clink, clank, facing Merlan with her chains clanking into each other, Ursula muttered under her breath.

[...I know, I know about it. All about that person, the end that wait that person.]

The mirror that tells the truth, told her about it.

The end of Himuro Takahina, the person in question didn't even know about it.

[I, already decided it. To that person which didn't have any more place to go, to that

person which didn't have any other fate other than disappearing from this world]

[--- Before he break, I will kill him.]

Holding determination that smeared with love in her heart.

Ursula Pendragon, facing off Merlan Mashule who had already become a monster.

Paired Devils Disaster

We've lost too many.

In the accident, we've lost too many lives.

Including Elbart, 13 big and small cities and villages were destroyed.

Then, the amount of the lives that was lost didn't even ranges within the hundreds or even thousands.

With only the amount of know death, over several hundreds of thousands live were lost.

This incident... was later called as [Paired devils disaster] and was recorded down as history, it was the worst incident out of the only three that were ever carved into history.

The second demon lord [Vampire Lord] and the fifth demon lord [Lilith Queen]

Those two monsters which are treated on the same level disaster as typhoon and rain of thunder, were existence than normal human usually cannot oppose.

However, due to the achievement of the hero who summoned by Mashanoizas, the two were defeated.

The hero who was able to achieve the title of [Demon lord killer] whom no one could achieved for more than a thousand years, Mayu Himuro.

Later, she was also able to achieve another great deed of killing the third demon lord, [Kaizer Beast] and the fourth demon lord [Despair Evil].

The paired devils disaster was over. However, it doesn't end the tragedy.

Why is that so? Because the perpetrator of the disaster.

The reason why Vermouth Erzalord got mad and the one who you could say lured Marieta Nightgale out of the perpetual night's area, the existence in the middle of the whirlpool.

The man whom with just his looks, charmed the two demon lords, has still not met his end and still exist out there.

Mayu Himuro should properly finish off Vermoth Erzalord.

After all, without Vermouth Erzalord's last magical power, he would have stayed as a corpse which he should have been.

He, Himuro Takahina, was an evil being.

He stole the hearts of the demon lords, as a result, many people lost their lives.

His existence, has already robbed countless lives.

That's right, Himuro Takahina, without a doubt was an evil being.

The 3 great country, that existed within the Baveron continent.

Mashanoizas, Shardia, Botlheinzel.

Other than those countries, there also existed 4 city-state that were within this continent.

Himuro Takahina's existence itself, was evil.

He changed the queen which was called as a saint into a tyranny, framing the well know knight leader as a devilish homicide.

Three among the four of the city-state, were completely destroyed without trace.

Looking at the result, he created an incident that made the incident that Vermouth Erzalord has done look pale in comparison.

The time he bared his fangs at the world.

Was a year after the [paired devils disaster] settled.

Spin off - the "what if" future Vermouth-Erzalord

The perpetual night forest where the golden moon continuously shone over it, [golden night woodland]

Deep inside the forest that was also called the forest of no return.

An old castle, where the vampire Princess lived alone.

[Hina ~]

Inside the dark corridor inside the castle, was a girl walking briskly.

Every time her long, platinum blonde hair rubbed off each other, *shash* *shash* sound could be heard.

[Hina ~ ?]

She opened the door near her and peeked inside.

After confirming that there's no one inside the room, she closed the door and once again walked down the corridor.

In the end, after she continued doing that 10 more times, she stopped and tilted her head.

[Hi ~ na ~?]

While looking at her surroundings, she called out the name with a slightly loud voice. She unconsciously hugged the big book, that she carried with both of her hands.

[.....Muuh ~]

Finally, the end of her eyebrows which are usually slightly dropped, dropped even more, on her expressionless doll like face, a slight discontent could be seen.

She's displeased... But, due to her cute gesture that's unbecoming of her appearance of woman in twenties, all it does was made her looking like she's pouting.

In reality, rather than anger, she's just simply sulking.

He, whom usually stayed in the library wasn't there. Even though, she moved around like this, she still couldn't find his figure.

...Even though, she had already chosen the book for him to read it to her for the day.

While she thought about it, she peevishly mutter "Sheesh".

At that moment.

[Eh? what happened, nee-san. Why are you here?]

[!]

A voice came from behind.

Vermouth whom just a moment ago pouted, changed her expression into smile, thus she turned around.

The one who was standing over there, a silver haired man wearing a red crimson butler suit.

Himuro Takahina.

The only resident of this castle other than Vermouth herself, he was her beloved one.

Holding a tray with teacups placed on top of it, he gave a puzzled look at vermouth who was walking around the corridor.

[Since it's about the time for nee-san to wake up, I went to prepare tea..... Did something happened?]

[Nah, it's nothing. It's just that you're not there, so I went and search for you.]

They just passed by each other at the right timing.

Also, she completely forgot about the fact that lately, Takahina always prepared tea for her.

Vermouth showing off an ambiguous smile to dodge Takahina's question, she then pushed his back and urged him.

[Quickly, I want you to read this book for me.] - vermuth -

[--- --- Then, the king, giving an order to subjugate the dragon.]

Inside her private room, she laid down.

Using his lap as a lap-pillow, she asked him to read the book for her with his clear voice.

For vermuth, this was her moment of supreme bliss.

This moment, when the kind him pampering her with all of his might, she really loved it.

[Hina. My hair, pat it.]

[An easy task.]

The feel of his fingers slipping into her hair, more times better than some unskillful combing.

She lazed around and groaned from her throat, as she stuck around to Takahina.

He slightly made a biter smile..... thinking that it's good for Vermouth to be in a good mood and so he let her do as she liked.

Slowly.

It's the moment where they felt that the time seemed like it slowed down around them.

However, just like the phrase that's been told in all ages and country.

Boooooooooooooooooooooooooooooom !!!!!

Good times don't last forever.

[Hmm? Aah, it's already the time, eh?]

[.....]

Takahina raised his head hearing the sudden explosion.

Vermouth who just comfortably lazed around, clearly showing displeasure on her face.

[Well then, nee-san. It seems that the usual is coming, shall we go and see it?]

[Bothersome.]

Showing that she's sulking, vermouth threw her face to the side.

But, if she didn't go, the castle will become a mess.

Even while she's thinking about it, a similar explosion from before happened three more times.

[.....Fuuh ~]

Takahina shook his head looking at Vermouth who's throwing a tantrum just like a little child.

He stretched out his hand towards her.

[Let's go, Vermouth.]

[~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Kh!!!!]

Was she's surprised because her name was suddenly called, or perhaps she's just embarrassed?

She opened her eyes wide, she looked at Takahina with a red beet face.

Giving an impression that he's done it for her, Takahina giggled, then he beckoned Vermouth.

Somehow feeling like she's defeated, showing him her weak side, vermouth averted her eyes from Takahina.

And then, she grasped his hand tightly.

[Let's have a match, vampire! Today I will not lose you, you know that!]

The one who invaded the castle from the big hole that was made in the wall just like usual, a girl who carried two big bows in different size.

She was a great adventure who was called the [Bow Princess] in public, it was Merlan Mashule.

[.....]

vermouth hated that girl.

There're three reasons for it. It was because she kept destroying the walls every time she invades the castle just like this.

She always come during a good time, which is every time she wanted to flirt with Takahina.

And then, more than that.

[Welcome, Merlan. How about a cup of tea?]

[Takahina! Just you wait, today for sure I will save you from the grasp of this evil vampire's hands!]

She really didn't like it how Takahina was taking quite a liking to that woman.
And so.

[Eat this! The attack that I came up with after good sleep for three days straight, the anti-vampire att- -]

[Too long.]

[Unyaaaa ! ?]

Merlan received a poke with vampire great magical power at her forehead, and thus she's blown out from the hole in the castle.

[Kuh, don't get carried away in this transient victory this tiiimmeee -----]

Since you could hear her excuses while she's blown away, she shouldn't be dead.

[Now Hina. After we fix the wall, let's continue the story]

[Ah, yes.]

Since this was an usual occurrence, Takahina didn't really mind it.

The two of them, started to repair the wall looking like they're already accustomed to it.

---- That's one of the possibility that could happen in one of the scenario.

Vermouth-Erzalord knowing about the suffering that Takahina held in his heart.

And then, she who accepted it and got accepted by Takahina from the bottom of his heart, such a future.

If, the gear of fate deviated for just a little bit.

Surely it will would have become the reality, but that was one of the possibilities.

Where Himuro Takahina and Vermouth Erzalord lived happily.

Such future, might exist.



PDF by: traitorA#ZEN